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Linda McCulloch
Superintendent

DATE: April 2, 2007

TO: School Food Authorities (SFAs)

FROM: Christine Emerson, School Nutrition Programs Director

SUBJECT: Fluid Milk and Other Food Components/Menu Items in Reimbursable Lunches

It has come to the attention of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that there may be some confusion concerning fluid milk, and how it is offered in reimbursable lunches. To clarify, under all menu planning approaches, fluid milk is a separate food component/menu item. It may not be presented as one choice in a beverage category; for instance, milk may not be paired with juice. Nor may milk be combined as one choice in a list of other food items or side dishes; for example, a menu that states "Choose one: 1% chocolate milk, 2% white milk, carrot sticks, or apple" is not acceptable.

The "offer versus serve" provisions under any menu planning approach allow a student to decline fluid milk. However, the student's choice to decline milk cannot then enable the student to take some other item in its place; i.e., an additional item that would not otherwise be available to them as shown in our example with milk and fruit/vegetables choices in competition.

Each of the food components/menu items plays a unique nutritional role in the menu planning approaches. Permitting a student to exchange one food component/menu item for another does not support the nutritional mission of the National School Lunch Program and also undermines the educational value of the school dining experience.

If you have questions, please contact School Nutrition Programs at (406) 444-2501.